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ABSTRACT

Issues in early childhood teacher education are discussed in terms of six dilemmas that may explain the low levels of impact and satisfaction attributed to the field by practitioners. Dilemmas are defined as predicaments having two main features: a choice between two or more alternative courses of action, each of which is problematic; and the sacrifice of the advantages of one alternative as a consequence of choosing another. The six dilemmas discussed include: (1) coverage versus mastery of course content; (2) thematic versus eclectic course focus; (3) current versus future needs of students; (4) affective versus evaluative emphasis in the relationship of teachers and students; (5) current versus innovative educational practices; and (6) specific versus global assessment criteria. If the formulation of the dilemmas is correct, then teacher educators are faced with a series of choices of errors; no error-free alternatives exist. The next step in the consideration of the long-term development of the profession of teaching young children seems to be the identification of "least worst" errors. (RH)

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Issues and Dilemmas in Early Childhood Teacher Education

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Issues and Dilemmas in Early Childhood Teacher Education

The education of teachers for early childhood education is a concern to many groups: national government bodies, local educational authorities, the heads and teachers in the receiving schools and their clients, teacher educators and the students themselves. Each of these groups is known to complain that teacher education has little impact on its students, and the latter are known to characterize their own experience of teacher education as unsatisfying and of little practical value. Each group probably has expectations of what teacher education should accomplish, and explanations for why it appears to fall short of them much of the time.

In this paper, the major issues of concern to those who have a stake in teacher education are discussed in terms of six dilemmas that may help to account for the low level of impact and satisfaction attributed to it.

Definition of a dilemma

In this discussion the term dilemma refers to a predicament which has two main features (Room, 1985). First, it involves a choice between two or more alternative courses of action that are equally problematic, Second, it concerns a predicament in which the choice of one of the alternative

courses of action sacrifices the advantages that might accrue if the other alternative were chosen. That is to say, if we choose A, the advantages inherent in alternative B will be forfeited. Futhermore, it is assumed that each of the two "horns" of the dilemma carry with them their own errors, and that error-free alternatives unlikely to be available. The underlying principle is that the available choices in such predicaments involve "a choice of error". Thus part of our task is to determine which is the "least worst error" in each predicament, and to identify some bases upon which to select which error is preferable.

Six Dilemmas in Early Childhood Teacher Education

Dilemma #1: Coverage versus Mastery

According to Westbury (1973), all teachers confront conflicting pressures concerning the extent to which to emphasize coverage versus mastery of the content and skills presented in the course. In this sense, all teachers, at every level are pulled in opposite directions: the more covered, the less mastered. The wider the scope of the content and skills, the less mastery of it can be achieved, and vice versa. We cannot do equal justice to both coverage and mastery.

In teacher education there is constant pressure to expand the curriculum so as cover more content and skills. Rarely is it proposed that an element in a course be dropped, although some reformers in the U. S. urge reduction in coverage of professional studies. Some reformers advocate adding a post-baccalaureate year to the standard four-year teacher education course, and particularly extended coverage of liberal studies, partly to ensure a "well educated" graduate, and partly to improve teachers' knowledge of the content and skills they are expected to teach. To some extent the Holmes Group's* (1986) advocacy of a fifth year for the teacher education program is intended to ensure greater coverage of the expanding body of the educational research and development literature and is consistent with the Holmes Group's its emphasis on improving the professional status of teaching.

Some pressure for expanded content coverage also comes from within the field of education in response to the need to sensitize teacher education students to cultural diversity, gender stereotyping, mainstreaming and special education issues. In the early childhood field,

* The Holmes Group is made up of sme 100 deans of schools of education in the U. S. who have proposed reforms in teacher education. See Holmes Group Report Tomorrow's Teachers.

relationships between teachers and parents, parent involvement and education, probably also deserve special attention (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1982).

Advantages of emphasizing coverage. One of the significant features of teaching young children is that it is not oriented to instruction in academic disciplines or particular subjects; rather it requires an integrated curriculum. Thus, ideally, teacher education for the early years helps students to become generalists with a wide range of knowledge and skills for teaching and guidance of young children. The content and skills to be covered should correspond to the principles that the younger the child the larger the proportion of the curriculum should be allocated to informal activities, and the young the child, the larger the proportion of those informal activities should be spontaneous play. The greater coverage the more likely students would be exposed to basic concepts and a range of resources they will be able to use when the teaching situation and the children's interests are very varied.

Furthermore, since the settings in which students can be employed are likely to vary widely on many dimensions, it is difficult to predict in advance which knowledge and skills of the whole range are most essential. It would seem to be a good safety measure to expose students to as much

as possible about the diversity of children and contexts they may encounter when employed.

Disadvantages of the coverage emphasis. The main problem in the selection of the greater coverage approach is that the teacher education course that might become not much more than a "smattering" approach. What it offers may indeed be learned, but probably not well enough to be retrieved under "fire" in the actual teaching situation. In such a case, the graduate and her receiving institution are likely to perceive that her education in college had little or no impact upon her.

Under high coverage conditions students are likely to feel constant pressure to "cram" into their heads what is to be learned just in order to get through the required assignments and examinations. They may perceive as their main concern having to stuff their minds with collections of vaguely related facts and the need to acquire a laundry list of techniques in order to meet performance criteria. In the process of coping with these pressures students may develop a distaste for learning. Certainly the disposition to be reflective is not likely to thrive when the program emphasizes wide coverage. Recent research on the effects of performance pressures on transfer and retention of what is learned suggests that the coverage approach may be disfunctional, especially in the long run (Dweck, 1986).

Under these circumstances students are unlikely to feel encouraged to examine deeply what is presented. The cumulative effect of such experiences over the period of the course may be to undermine or inhibit the disposition to delve into problems and to take responsibility for one's own learning (Katz & Raths, 1985). Furthermore, while the wide range of information, ideas and skills covered may be relevant and useful, lack of sufficient mastery of them may mean they are not very likely to be retrieved and employed later on under the pressure of the real world of action. It would therefore not be surprising to find that that the impact of such courses would be low, and that student satisfaction with them is also low.

Advantages of a mastery emphasis. Given the potential advantages and disadvantages of wide coverage, what might be the benefits of choosing the mastery option in this dilemma? Opting for greater mastery by reducing the range of content and skills covered could allow for emphasis on the development of dispositions that might serve the students' professional development in the long term (Katz & Raths, 1985). For example, the dispositions to look things up, to be resourceful and experimental, to consider and try alternative approaches to various aspects of their work, to be accepting, nurturant, thoughtful, open to fresh ideas, to cooperate with colleagues, and so forth, can be more easily

addressed when the teacher education course is less preoccupied with coverage and the unavoidable pressures it creates, and allows time for in-depth examination of a smaller range of topics and techniques. Time can be given to consideration of issues of appropriateness, context, situational constraints, ethical issues, pro's and con's of various practices and the complexities of professional practice. Time could be given to address the strengthening of such dispositions as reflectivity, thoughtfulness, and so forth.

Disadvantages of the mastery emphasis. Clearly the range of content and skills to be covered in a teacher education course can always be expanded. It is difficult to argue with the assertion that students should master all the knowledge they will be expected to teach. However, in the case of the early childhood teacher, being responsive to children's interests means that the student would require many specializations and a very long course in liberal and all the fine arts, the life and natural sciences, human development, linguistics, carpentry, physical education, and so forth.

The claims that students should have awareness, sensitivity, understanding, knowledge and techniques to help them respond to culturally diverse classes, to children with handicapping conditions, to irate or fearful parents, to

parents of many different and perhaps contentious ethnic groups, all have merit. It would be understandable if various advocacy groups resented the omission of their particular concerns from the content of the curriculum.

Summary. Given the short life of knowledge and skills learned under pressure, it would seem to be the "least worst" error to opt for mastery of a small range of content and skills deemed central to the practice of early childhood education. The specific content of a course may not be as important to its impact on career-long practice as some of its other parameters, e. g. ethos, philosophy, or valued dispositions. Furthermore, it is possible that even though the scope of coverage of a teacher education course is thought to be very wide, it may include considerable repetition. Though repetition would be likely to aid mastery (as long as boredom is avoided), experience suggests that many students find repetition a cause for dissatisfaction.

It seems reasonable also to assume that the mastery approach would give students greater feelings of competence and confidence (in what they have learned) and therefore a greater sense of satisfaction with their professional preparation than in the case of the coverage emphasis course. It is likely also that with a mastery emphasis courses would have a longer lasting impact on its graduates. The hypothesis is that the more fully mastered a concept,

principle of practice, or technique, the more likely it is that it will be employed "under fire," so to speak. However, if this horn of the dilemma is chosen, the field of early childhood education would have to reach a consensus on what content and skills deserve the greatest priority in a teacher education course.

Dilemma # 2 Thematic versus Eclectic Course Focus

Most teacher education programs in the U. S. consist of specified courses (i. e. classes in particular subjects assigned credit hours) or categories of course requirements which, when added up, qualify the student for teacher certification. Typically each course is offered by a member of the faculty specializing in the particular topic. Each instructor elects what to teach and what orientations, philosophies or themes to emphasize. Thus students are exposed to an eclectic array of approaches to teaching and learning. A few small teacher education institutions, (resembling British teacher training institutions), specialize in particular philosophies or orientations to education (e.g. Bank Street College of Education or Montessori training colleges) and organize their instruction around a coherent view of education. Every class comprising the course is committed to advance common themes as a basis for selecting content of classes, selecting the skills to be mastered, and evaluating their students.

Advantages of a thematic approach. It seems reasonable to assume that when students receive similar, or at least concordant messages from all their instructors, the program will have a greater and longer impact on their professional practices. Students in thematically oriented courses may feel that they are being given clear messages about how to proceed and about what is good or bad, or right and wrong in teaching. There is reason to believe that a program organized around a single and coherent theme or a unified approach to teaching will have a deeper and more enduring impact on graduates than one which offers students a wide range of alternative approaches. Furthermore, it is likely to be more satisfying to students.

Disadvantages of a thematic approach. A teacher education program organized around a particular doctrine or philosophy will equip graduates adequately to function in an early childhood education setting committed to that theme. However, if graduates are employed in settings that have adopted other themes, they would be ill-suited to the work. Indeed, when employment opportunities are limited, the single-theme approach jeopardizes graduates' chances of congenial employment opportunities.

If a teacher education program is organized around a single coherent theme it would have to be offered by a department team of colleagues that is in agreement on what

constitute appropriate practices, and in a sense, indoctrinates students into that view. There are many examples of such an approach (e.g. Montessori training) that seem to have a lasting impact on graduates. However, in a tertiary institutional setting -- at least in the U. S. -- which typically prizes and rewards individual scholarship, competition among faculty members for star status is reinforced, and team work among them is usually resisted and therefore highly unlikely. Furthermore, such a doctrinaire approach is antithetical to the ethos of a university which prizes openness to alternative points of view. Indeed, one of the virtues of locating teacher education inside polytechnic and multi-purpose higher education institutions is that students can be explosed to a range of disciplines, subjects, and competing ideas.

If a single theme or approach to teaching is adopted by a teaching department or program, how should the theme be selected, and by whom? If the program is offered in a public institution, how is the selection of a given theme legitimated? Such questions cannot be answered empirically; they are matters of policy and politics.

Advantages of an eclectic approach. Exposing students in an early childhood teacher education course to a range of competing ideas and methods contributes to their becoming familiar with the classical problems and history, to

becoming literate in the field, and to their recognition that alternative views of appropriate practices exist. The latter is consistent with a view of teacher education as professional socialization rather then merely teacher training. The eclectic approach also affords students the opportunity to seek out an approach to early childhood education that is most congenial to their own particular proclivities and dispositions.

Graduates of eclectic courses are more likely than those of thematic courses to be versatile in presenting themselves to future employers. Inasmuch as conclusive or compelling direct evidence in support of one approach versus others is as yet unavailable, presenting an eclectic array of alternatives seems advisable.

Disadvantages of an eclectic approach. Given that students are likely to be at a stage in their development in which clear unambiguous guidelines or "tips for teaching" are sought, the exposure to competing philosophies could become a source of confusion and anxiety, and hence dissatisfaction. Many undergraduate students coerce instructors into providing clear prescriptions or recipes for action; thus they are unlikely to respond positively to the suggestion to study the array of alternative approaches and select one most compatible to them. However, some may decribe this approach as faculty abdication of their own

professional judgment. Under these circumstances it would not be surprising if students dismissed the college staff as unable to "get its act together" and formed a united front with cooperating teachers in the schools against the influence of university instructors (see Zeichner and Liston, 1987). In such cases, it is expected that students would express high dissatisfaction with their teacher education. Such an approach would also not be likely to have an enduring impact on their subsequent professional performance.

The eclectic approach can also have deleterious effects on the relations between colleagues. Advocacy of a preferred approach to teaching without casting aspersions upon the judgment of colleagues who espouse other views presents difficult ethical as well as pedagogical conflicts. How is it possible to assert that approach A is developmentally appropriate for young children without suggesting that approach B is inappropriate? How can colleagues who assert different or competing versions of good practice work together on other matters of mutual concern?

Summary. On balance, it would seem that the thematic approach would offer greater satisfaction to students and have a more lasting impact on their professional development than the eclectic one. I believe this dilemma is far more problematic in teacher education in the U. S. than in

Britain. In part, it is a function of the nature of the institutions in which teacher education is offered, the way their missions are defined, and the way their reward systems function.

Dilemma # 3: Current versus Future Needs of Students

During the preservice period students are typically at a stage in their own development when they are instructor-dependent for direction, prescription, and evaluation. Tutors can satisfy these expectations or they can argue that the beginning of professional socialization should include encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning and future professional development and decide to withhold specific academic instructions, directions and prescriptions.

Advantages of addressing students' current needs. Preservice students typically come to the teacher education program having learned well during their previous schooling how to be successful as students -- in the narrow academic sense of that term. They are thus very likely to press tutors for clear academic directions and expectations, for guidelines concerning specific course requirements such as the exact length of term papers, points awarded for each assignment and exam question, and explicit criteria by which to obtain high marks in their courses. If tutors yield to

these pressures and reinforce long established habits of attending to academic procedures rather than to intellectual content, students are likely to feel comfortable and at home in the system. Thus they are likely to be reasonably satisfied with their experience in the teacher education program. The impact of the course may be adequate in the short term, but is unlikely to be enduring.

Disadvantages of indulging students' current needs. Students' concerns with these kinds of academic procedures are a function of their previous socialization and characterize the developmental stage at which they embark upon their teacher education. However, it is not clear to what extent being good at being a student in the strict academic (versus intellectual) sense is compatible or contributory to ultimately becoming good at teaching. Furthermore, dispositions that might serve their long term professional development - especially the disposition to go on learning - are not likely to be manifested and thus strengthened if students' current expecations for clear directions and prescriptions are met. Thus indulging students' demands for academic procedures, specifics about grades, exams, and so forth may undermine professional development in the long term.

Advantages of addressing long term needs. If, on the other hand, instructors resist such academic pressures and

offer flexibility, open-ended tasks, loosely structured assignments, and opportunity for initiative and for independent study and elective projects, students are likely to suffer anxiety and become dissatisfied with the program. Furthermore, they are may feel very vulnerable to the particular whims of the instructor which might engender feelings of insecurity that may undermine the educative impact and value of the course.

This dilemma can be examined in the light of the feedforward principle common to all anticipatory socialization, namely, that preservice teacher education consists largely of providing answers to questions students have not yet asked, and of preparing them for eventualities rather than actualities. The general principle underlying the feedforward effect is that while experience, once obtained, does not change, the evaluation of it may change as time passes and subsequent experiences and understandings accrue.

An example of professional socialization and the feedforward effect in another field comes from a findings reported by Neel (1978) of a study of 200 executives who were asked about what changes they would like if they were to go back to undergraduate school in business, and what classes would have enhanced their careers. Neel reported that

> Three distinct categories emerged...(1) individuals out of an undergraduate program for only three years indicated they would include more technical or "how-to" courses... (2)...executives with seven to ten years' work experience indicated their careers would have been significantly enhanced if they had had additional courses in human relations, psychology or sociology to equip them for more effective dealings with people within the organization; and (3) individuals with twelve to fifteen years of work experience indicated that they would have liked additional courses in philosophy, religious studies and literature. (Neel, 1978, p. 7).

These data partially support the hypothesized feedforward principle and suggest that the shifts in graduates' evaluations of their teacher education experiences may be systematically related to developmental factors associated with the progress of their careers. It is interesting to note that the respondents in the second or third group in Neel's sample might have resisted the study of sociology or philosophy during their training, probably on the grounds that these subjects were not sufficiently practical.

In conceptualizing the feedforward principle, Katz and Raths (1985) propose that teacher education can be thought of in terms of three time periods as follows:

Period I: Anticipatory - before enrollment in a training program.

Period II: Participatory - during training

Period III: Retrospective - following training,

during teaching career

During Period I -- anticipatory -- before enrolling in a teacher education course, the future student has some perhaps vague notions of the nature of the training experiences about to be undertaken. Of particular interest are students' views concerning how practical and how interesting the course is likely to be, and what features of it are expected to be of most help in learning to teach. During Period II -- participatory, -- while the student is an active participant in the course, he or she also evaluates the interest and usefulness of elements of the course. In Period III, -- retrospective -- spanning an entire teaching career, the graduate also evaluates the experiences obtained earlier.

Katz and Raths (1985) hypothesized that the evaluations, particularly with respect to the applicability, practicality, and interest of sub-units of the course change during the early years of the career such that what may have been evaluated positively with respect to interest or applicability during Period II may, retrospectively, in Period III, be judged low on either or both of these criteria. Similarly, what a student evaluates negatively during Period II may, retrospectively be reassessed positively. Thus a teacher in the third year of employment might say such things as, "I was bored by the work required

of me while a student, but now, as I look back, I'm glad I had to do it" or vice versa. Or a student might say something like "When I was a student I never expected to make use of what I learned in class X, but in fact I have applied it often"; or "The work I had to do in such-and-such class was very interesting, but now as I look back, I think it was a waste of time."

It is likely that practice teaching experiences receive more positive evaluations during both Period II and early during Period III than other elements of the course. Teachers very often claim that teaching practice was the only part of their teacher preparation of lasting value. The extent to which these claims are related to the role played by the supervisor in the teaching practice experience is not known. However, if the hypothesized feedforward principle is valid, it may be that some of what supervisors do that makes students feel uncomfortable at the time may be evaluated positively in retrospect, and that supervisors' actions or inactions intended to make students feel comfortable could be criticized in retrospect.

Another disadvantage to indulging students' current needs for unambiguous, prescriptive answers to the questions they ask may be that though they feel satisfied at the time, when they evaluate their preservice education retrospectively once on the job, their evaluations may

become more negative. Similarly, preservice experiences evaluated negatively at the time they occurred may, in retrospect be re-evaluated positively. In other words, the experiences students have in their preservice course do not change, but the meaning, value, and benefits attributed to them may change with increasing professional service.

Summary. The major implication of the hypothesized feedforward principle is that decisions concerning what is in students' best interests cannot be based entirely upon their current evaluations of their experiences while they are undergoing them. The difficult question is: On what basis should those decisions be made? The feedforward principle also leads to questions like: What aspects of teaching can and cannot be learned in advance? What aspects of the role and functions of a teacher can best -- or indeed -- can only be learned in situ? Such questions are difficult to answer empirically as well as logically. Nevertheless, it is likely that many major aspects of the teacher's role cannot be learned in advance, and we may have to settle for helping students simply to learn about them. Empirical validation of the feedforward principle awaits longitudinal follow-up studies.

Dilemma #4: Affective versus Evaluation Emphasis

Part of a teacher's role at every level is to address pupils' needs for support and encouragement. Some teacher education programs emphasize the supportive and pastoral functions of the staff more than others. It is also part of every teacher's role to evaluate the progress of learners, and in the case of professional socialization, to act in ways to exclude weak or inept recruits from entering the profession.

The Advantages of the Affective Emphasis. Most students in teacher education need some emotional support and encouragement to help them through the rough spots. Teacher educators, especially in their roles as supervisors of practice teaching, are sometimes subjected to strong pressure from student teachers for affective support. Students frequently want positive feedback that tells them to "keep going," to "try again," that they are doing well, giving weak or timid students the courage to continue inspite of fumbling first efforts. The major advantages to emphasising the helping and nurturing aspects of the supervisor's role is that students are likely to be more satisfied with their training experiences (Combs, 1965).

Disadvantages of the Affective Emphasis. The provision of strong support and encouragement may inhibit students' development of emotional independence and

self-reliance. Furthermore, the teacher educator is often faced with the question of how long to continue being positive and supportive in the hope that the student will ultimately improve, or whether or when to counsel a poor student out of the program early before it becomes too late to deny certification to someone who has already invested much time, energy and funds her education.

There is a sense in which strong emphasis on the affective aspects of relationships between tutors and students distinguishes the ethos of the college or department of education from other college and departments on the campus. While some may see such a distinction in a positive light, it is likely that many will take the view that early childhood educators are fuzzy minded and soft headed, less exacting than colleagues in other branches of higher education, reluctant to apply high standards and to make tough decisions about student achievement.

Advantages of the emphasis on evaluation. On the other hand, the teacher educator's gate-keeping role requires realistic evaluation of the students' progress, and the exercise of the responsibility to counsel poor ones out of the program. Furthermore, when tutors make their concern with standards and evaluation sufficiently -- probably optimally -- salient to the students, they convey a sense of

seriousness about the program and its goals; hence the ethos of the teacher education program is a serious one. It is reasonable to assume that a program of professional socialization should have an optimum level of suffering such that participants feel that the profession for which they being prepared for is important, that not everyone is admitted to it, and that the knowledge and skills to be learned require real effort and even some (optimal) stress.

Disadvantages of the emphasis on evaluation. Realistic evaluation requires an "optimum distance" between the tutor and the students (Katz, 1984). Students may experience this distance as discouraging, or even perceive it as uncaring. During the critical practice teaching experiences, this distancing on the part of the tutor may discourage a struggling student. In some circumstances the student may respond by forming an emotional bond with the cooperating teacher, and together they may constitute an alliance against the college staff.

Summary. If the teacher educator emphasizes his supportive functions, he may admit into teaching those students who might become poor teachers. If on the other hand, the choice is to emphasize evaluative functions, some students who may have become good teachers might be excluded. After all, some students will improve with the nurturance and support of a supervisor, but some will not.

Which error is preferrable? How can both responsibilities behonored?

To optimize both the affective and evaluative functions of the teacher educator's role may require informal and constant contact with students in the context of which genuine and trusting relationships can be developed. When the relationships between tutors and students are optimally close and trusting it would be possible to provide both support and honest feedback without discouraging a struggling student excessively. The development of such relationships is highly labor-intensive. They require that the teacher educator be easily accessible and readily available to students, not just at times of crisis, but on a regular basis for frequent consultation.

Dilemma #5: Current versus Innovative Practices

A teacher education program may give priority to helping students to acquire competence in the current standard practices in the schools, or it may emphasize learning how to employ recently developed innovative practices. Given a finite amount of time for learning pedagogical methods, a choice of which to emphasize is usually required.

Advantages of emphasizing current practices. A good grounding in current teaching practices prepares graduates

to take up their positions with minimal adjustment problems. New teachers can seek suggestions and advice from experienced colleagues who can appreciate that they are in the early stages of learning the teaching methods withwhich they are already familiar and that have been long employed in the school.

Having been trained in current standard practices new teachers are likely to experience a measure of continuity between their first teaching assignment and their practice teaching experiences. Thus a program emphasis on helping students acquire competence in current practices is likely to be most satisfying to students, especially in the short term. The long term satisfaction derived from this approach is difficult to predict. On balance, satisfaction is likely to remain if the graduate is not faced with pressures to change.

If induction of students into current standard practices is emphasized, the research and development mission of universities would be difficult to rationalize. A brief internship or a training program characteristic of a normal school would suffice to prepare new teachers. As Patterson (in press) points out, the normal school* was

* The original teacher training institutions in North America were called "normal schools."

devoted to learning the behaviors and attitudes designed to facilitate accommodation to the established system in the schools by imitating practicing teachers.

Disadvantages of emphasizing current practices. Emphasis on current practices, essentially acquired from practice teaching, suggests that the impact of the college as a specialized training institution is low, in both the short and long term. It has merely served to facilitate the impact of the school itself and its current practices.

Part of this dilemma is that it may be difficult for tutors to urge students to employ practices other than the current ones, presumably on the basis of compelling evidence, without undermining students' respect for and confidence in the cooperating teachers. Though this predicament may not directly affect student satisfaction or program impact, it is a major issue confronting teacher educators.

Advantages of emphasizing innovative practices. A major raison d'etre of a professional school is to develop new knowledge and innovate practices by which the profession's standard of practice and contribution to general welfare are improved. It is assumed that when new recruits are equipped with the new knowledge and taught to use the innovative methods of teaching, they will upgrade professional

practice. Thus the emphasis on disseminating new ideas and practices through new graduates is consistent with the main mission of a university teacher education department. Teacher education departments outside of universities may not feel as much pressure to emphasize innovation as those in universities. This function of professional schools is carried out most effectively when tutors and practicing teachers work closely together in a context of mutual respect. In communities in which the availability of "good" teaching practice sites is limited tutors are frequently confronted with difficulties in maintaining mutually respectful relations with school personnel. This presents the tutor with difficult ethical conflicts with respect to both the student and the teachers involved.

Disadvantages of emphasizing innovative practices. Emphasis on helping students learn innovative teaching methods in a teacher education program also presents problems during practice teaching. Although there are no studies on the extent of disrepancy between the practices urged upon students by tutors and those of cooperating teachers, it may be that they would dismiss students' efforts to implement new practices by reminding them that the classroom is "the real world." Students may react to such directives by rejecting the schools and even opting out

of a teaching career, or by forming a united front with the cooperating teacher against their tutors.

Some informal reports indicate that novice teachers who attempt to employ innovative methods are accused by their experienced colleagues of "showing off" or otherwise rocking the boat. However, reports have also been heard of placing brand new college graduates in classrooms with the most difficult children on the grounds that they are fresh from training in "the latest techniques." Teacher educators might pride themselves on helping new teachers develop innovative practices, but become discouraged when they rarely see those practices in used because of institutional resistance to change and experimentation.

The innovative emphasis is likely to cause dissatisfaction among students, certainly in the short term. The extent to which teachers look back on their training in newer methods with satisfaction later on is not known.

Summary. To minimize the conflicting pressures resulting from this dilemma, tutors might suggest to students that they strive to master current practices first. Tutors might then introduce alternative practices and indicate to students that once they feel competent and confident in their ultimate teaching posts, they can experiment with preferred alternative practices. This

strategy for optimizing the advantages of both horns of the dilemma is to take a developmental approach to students' current and future needs.

Dilemma #6: Specific versus Global Assessment Criteria

A program might define its objectives in crisp, concrete and specific ways, making clear to all of its students precisely what is expected of the. Alternatively, a program's objectives might make use of broadly or vaguely defined constructs such as "The curriculum provides candidates with integrated and interdisciplinary knowledge and understanding of child development..." (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1982, p. 3). The latter omits detailed information about how the objective is to be assessed. Choices made by the teacher educators on this issue are bound to affect the level of satisfaction experienced by students and probably the impact of the program as well.

Advantages of specific criteria. The criteria by which learners' progress is assessed can vary in specificity. High specificity of the criteria for the assessment has several advantages. First, the more specific they are, the more easily they can be made explicit. Thus students easily come to know what is expected of them and what is required for success. Second, it is fairly well established that the

more specific the assessment criteria, the more assiduously students work at attaining success on them (Natriello & Dornbusch, 1984). Third, most teacher education students are admitted into higher education because of successful socialization into the disposition to work for grades and to pass examinations. They are therefore likely to feel comfortable when the grading criteria are clear. Fifth, specificity and explicitness concerning how students' progress and performance are to be judged is consistent with a sense of fairness. Explicit and specific assessment procedures constitute a kind of contract between a student and instructor implying a mutual agreement that "if you do your part, I'll do mine." Such criteria usually consist of points awarded to specific assignments that are accumulated to yield a final grade. Summing points and scores appears to be objective, and to involve little subjective judgment on the part of the instructor. Overall, at least in the short term, students are likely to feel confortable and satisfied when the teacher education program adopts specific, explicit, and clear assessment procedures.

Disadvantages of specific assessment criteria. The more explicit and specific the assessment criteria, the more trivial is the conception of teaching that is presented to students. Second, the ethos created by emphasis on specific criteria is apt to be more technical than intellectual and

such an ethos is unlikely to cultivate such intellectual dispositions as reflectivity, and openness to new ideas and alternative interpretations of teaching predicaments, and disposition to take responsibility for their own learning. All of these dispositions could have an impact on professional practice in the long term.

The advantage of a global assessment approach. The advantage of a global approach to assessment of students' progress is that it takes into account the complex nature of teaching, and a broad conception of teaching can be addressed. Holistic criteria might for example include professional dispositions (Katz and Raths, 1985) that are difficult to specify in detail, and depend upon observation of students over a period of time. Holistic judgments enable instructors to put the students' behavior into a context of multiple occasions and situations in which they have been observed, and a sense of how they might function in the complex professional environment of a school can be incorporated into the evaluation procedures.

The disadvantage of the global assessment approach. As suggested in the discussion on the advantages of specific assessment criteria, under the global approach students are likely to be dissatisfied in that they may feel the assessments are arbitrary and unfair; they may become anxious about the outcome of their efforts. When tutors

answer vaguely such typical questions from students as "Do we have to know this?", "Will it be on the test?", students are apt to be resentful, and may wonder if the tutor knows what he or she is doing.

Summary. Assessment of students' progress is one of the most stubborn predicaments facing teacher educators. Certainly some parts of the course are more appropriately assessed specifically, and some holistically. Nevertheless, student and teacher appraisal strategies characterized by detailed lists of decontextualized behaviors may reveal whether the behaviors have been learned, but cannot guarantee that the dispositions to use the behaviors consistently, appropriately or with sufficient confidence have been acquired. A more global approach would take into account the necessity of establishing dispositional learning. Careful attention to the development of professionally relevant dispositions is likely to have a long term impact on students' development as teachers.

Accommodation to the conflicting pressures involved in this dilemma might be addressed by doing a bit of both. Specific assessement criteria can be applied in the formal instructional context of formal professional studies. But holistic criteria can be applied in the informal context of tutors' discussions and evaluations and writing recommendations for individual students. When the

'objective' criteria in the form of grades and test scores are at variance with the holistic judgments included in references and recommendations, tutors' credibility is undermined. Tutors are more likely to withhold non-objective assessments from written reports, and more likely to employ them verbally, attenuating the credibility problem.

Conclusion

One of the major concerns of teacher educators as well as other groups who have a stake in teacher education is that they seem to have insufficient impact on students. Indeed, teachers themselves often claim that their own teacher education was not effective. Among the most severe critics of teacher education are its own graduates. Certainly there is some variation: some teacher education courses are more effective than others, and some are evaluated more positively by their graduates than others. The dilemmas described in this paper seem to be generic to all teacher education, though some are more acute in some countries than others. If the formulation of these six dilemmas is correct, then we are faced with a series of choices of errors: there are no error-free alternatives. The next step seems to be to determine which are the "least worst" errors in considering the long term development of the profession of teaching young children.

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